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## Special Hunting Issue

# Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks



The Newsletter of Region One

Volume 4, No. 5

September/October 1994

## Hunters Gather to Celebrate Hunting Traditions

Hunters deserve credit for saving wildlife populations in North America, says author and hunter advocate Jim Posewitz. Posewitz, the Executive Director of Orion The Hunters Institute, was the featured speaker at hunter responsibility workshops held in Kalispell and Libby in September. The workshops, attended by 70 hunters, were designed to celebrate Montana's Hunting Heritage Week and to provide hunters with information on hunting heritage and hunter ethics.

The workshops were sponsored by FWP, Flathead Wildlife, Inc. and the Libby Rod and Gun Club. At the sessions, Posewitz, author of the new book, *Beyond Fair Chase*, traced the history of wildlife conservation and the role of hunters.

"During the early part of this century, wildlife populations in this country were almost gone," Posewitz said, noting that the number of deer and elk in Montana had dropped to just a few thousand. "At the point when our wildlife could have been lost, a group of folks stepped in. And those folks were hunters."

Posewitz added that largely through the efforts of hunters, deer in Montana now number nearly 1 million and elk number more than 100,000. Posewitz credited the success with the uniquely American experience of populism in terms of hunting and wildlife management.

"In Europe and in most of the rest of the world, wildlife and hunting are reserved for the elite and the rich," he said. He described a recent trip he took to Khirdistan in the former Soviet Union where he saw expanses of habitat devoid of wildlife. "The habitat looked fine," he said. "I kept waiting to see some sort of antelope-like creature, but there was just nothing."

### Habitat Project Aids Elk and Songbirds

What do 800-pound bull elk and two-ounce lazuli buntings have in common? They are both beneficiaries of a habitat improvement project along the east side of Hungry Horse Reservoir.

This innovative project, conducted as part of an effort to mitigate for wildlife habitat flooded by Hungry Horse Reservoir, is designed to nearly double the elk herd in the Firefighter Mountain area and to track the number and diversity of breeding songbirds at the same time. The habitat  
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Posewitz, an adjunct professor of philosophy at Montana State University, maintained that a key to preserving wildlife and hunting traditions is respecting the history of wildlife conservation in America. He is a strong advocate of developing programs in history and the social sciences aimed at improving the training of wildlife biologists.

In his presentation and in his book about the traditions and ethics of hunting, Posewitz urges hunters to police their ranks. "As hunters we must hold ourselves to the highest standards of ethical conduct," he said, calling hunters the conservation heroes. "We can maintain our hunting traditions by passing on our heritage to our children with distinction. That is our sacred trust and we will do it. And I'm going to spend the rest of my life seeing that we do."

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**AUTHOR JIM POSEWITZ** urged hunters at workshops in Flathead and Lincoln counties to cherish the hunting opportunity they have in America. In most of the world, Posewitz said, hunting and wildlife are gone or are reserved for the elite and the rich.



# Habitat Project Aids Elk and Songbirds

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improvement methods include small openings cut in the dense lodgepole forest of the area designed specifically for the needs of wildlife.

"The project is based on the assumption that winter range is limiting," said FWP Biologist John Vore. "If we can improve the quality and quantity of elk food we will have healthier elk and better production of calves." That, says Vore, is the best way to increase the herd.

In this area of Montana elk are browsers, keying in on plants like oregon grape, pacific yew, serviceberry and mountain maple. The habitat treatments average 13 acres and are designed to favor these plants and mimic natural openings and edge environments. Dead trees, or "snags", are left to provide sites for cavity nesting birds. The project, funded through Bonneville Power Administration and the Northwest Power Planning Council, incorporates specially designed logging and burning patterns. Conducted with the help of the U.S. Forest Service, the treatments provide timber and logging jobs as well.

Both the elk and songbird portions of the project employ the same study design. Biologists collect baseline wildlife data in control areas or before the habitat treatment takes place, then follow the results after treatment by keeping track of the use by wildlife.

In the elk portion of the project, biologists have nearly 3,000 radio locations of marked elk and have documented each marked elk's range and movements. In addition, biologists count elk pellets along established transects as an index of elk use in the treated and untreated areas, and they follow the condition of the elk through laboratory pellet and



**EXAMINATION.** Biologist John Vore (right) and Research Specialist Rick Malta examine the growth of shrubs browsed by elk in openings designed to create more elk winter range. Specialized logging patterns have opened more than 30 areas to compensate for winter range flooded by Hungry Horse Reservoir.


urine analysis. On top of all this, Vore and Research Specialist Rick Malta conduct detailed vegetation surveys to look at density and browsing of key plants.

FWP Biologist Dan Casey, known as one of the top bird experts in Montana, sees the bird portion of the project as a major benefit for Montana hunters and wildlife viewers.

"These birds evolved with the forests and eat insects that are harmful to trees," he said. "From a practical standpoint, it's crucial that we know the consequences of elk habitat management to the wildlife community as a whole. We want to be proactive and avoid doing our wildlife management in a courtroom." Casey added that birds are the sound of the forest, and that birdwatching is one of the fastest-growing outdoor activities.

Casey, Research Assistant Dwight Bergeron and their crew have established about 100 sampling sites coordinated with the elk habitat treatments. They gather bird and plant information at each site to test the effects of the treatments on the wildlife community.

"Birds make up a large percentage of the animals in this area, and they respond quickly to change," said Casey, noting that they've documented about 100 different species of birds at their sites. "Songbirds are great environmental indicators."

Both Casey and Vore emphasize the application of their information beyond the boundaries of their study area. "We want the greatest value possible from this information," said Casey. "We've designed this project to get the information and put it to practical use as soon as possible." 



**COUNTING BIRDS.** Biologist Dan Casey (right) and Research Assistant Dwight Bergeron have documented 100 songbird species in the project area. Bird and habitat information are indicators of the effects of elk habitat improvement on the wildlife community.



# FROM THE COMMISSIONER:

## Report from FWP Commissioner Charlie Decker

**AUGUST COMMISSION MEETING:** At the August Commission meeting in Helena, we set the number of deer B tags, elk special tags, mountain lion quotas, and waterfowl seasons and bag limits.

**Whitetail Deer:** The Commission opted to liberalize whitetail B tags in Region 1. People seem to like the B tags, and this should help us reduce the number of whitetail does in areas where we have depredation problems.

**Cow Elk:** Cow elk tags were set at about the same as in 1993, because we have a similar season structure. We'll take a few cow elk where we haven't in the past in the Thompson River country and the Tobacco Plains near Eureka.

**Mountain Lion:** I haven't been very pleased with the way things were with mountain lions in the Region. I thought that we should try to distribute the harvest. We divided some of the hunting districts that were lumped together. This should spread the harvest to some areas that tend to get snow later and therefore will take a few lions off big game winter range. This action increased the quotas somewhat region-wide. Quotas in most hunting districts went up; a few went down. A meeting we had in Kalispell with interested lion hunters brought forward many good ideas that we will consider for the next season-setting process.

**Turkey:** 318 hunters applied for the 300 fall turkey permits which were available. It seems that we have plenty of turkeys so I recommended that we issue tags for

all 318 applicants. So fall turkey hunters should be happy! Access is still something we need to work on.

**Antelope:** Surveys showed that numbers of antelope were down so we issued about 20 percent fewer tags than in 1993. The number of applicants was also down.

**Ducks:** Duck hunters will get an additional ten days in the field this year. We had the choice of (1) increasing bag limits by one duck and leaving the season the same as in 1993; or (2) having ten more days of hunting and one less bird in the limit. The Commission voted for the second option.

### Youth Hunting Camp

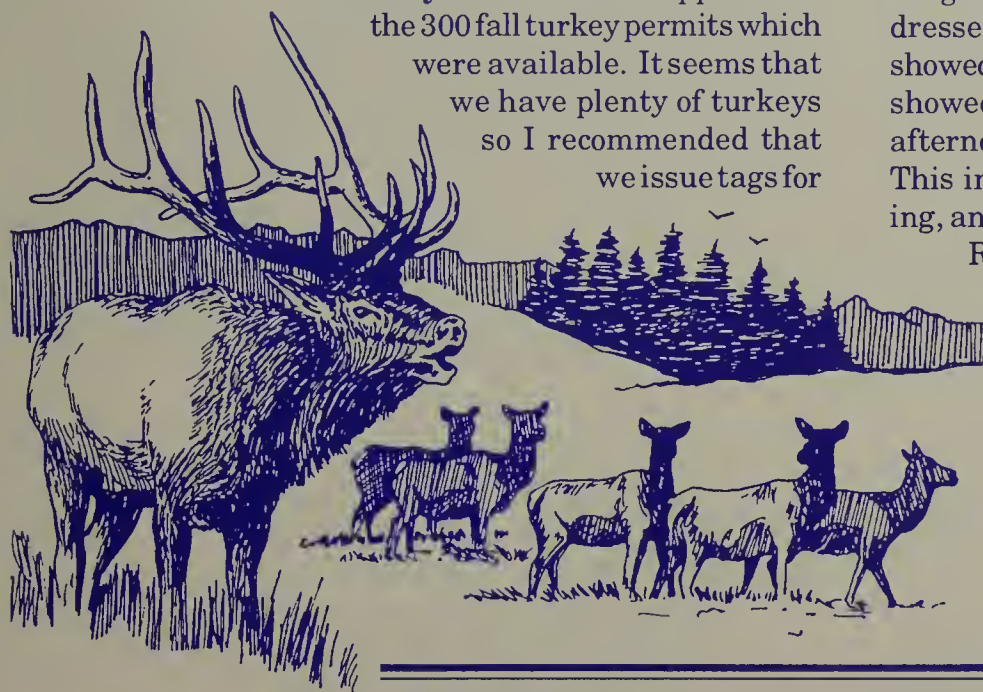
We held our 4th annual youth hunting camp in Lincoln County on August 6 and 7. Fifty eight kids registered and a good time was had by all.

Our ten stations and instructors were: map reading (Jerry Wolcott); compass course (Russ Hudson); Biology (Jerry Brown); Hunter Ethics (Mack Long); Forestry (Dave Williams); Archery (Rich Hjort); Black Powder (John McBride); Large Rifle with Scope (Don Clark); .22 Rifle and Pistol (Jr. Crismore and Frank Sighting); Survival (Bill and Cindy Betlach).

Each station gives the campers a hands-on extension of the information they received in the Hunter Education Program. On Saturday evening, Biologist Jerry Brown field dressed a road-killed deer. Jerry Mercer, a taxidermist, showed how to cape the deer and local butcher Jim Hutchinson showed students how to properly cut up the deer. On Sunday afternoon, the parents are invited to a closing ceremony. This includes a bugling contest which is always entertaining, and the drawing for a youth rifle which is donated by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. This year the lucky winner was **John Beebe** of Libby.

I wish everyone a safe and successful hunting season!

—You can contact Commissioner Decker with your comments and questions at: 176 Hammer Road, Libby, MT 59923; 293-6465. 🐾



## Montana Hunting History

1869: First laws protecting game birds closes quail and partridge seasons for three years.

1876: First closed seasons on furbearers and waterfowl.

1877: Act made it unlawful to waste game meat.

1895: First fish and game board authorized by the Legislature.

1913: Montana Fish and Game commission organized; Sun River Game preserve created by the Legislature.

1923: Grizzly bears protected as a game animal.

1931: First big game resident licenses issued.

1941: First wildlife biologist hired.

1957: Deer and elk hunting units established.

1962: Bounty removed on mountain lion.

1986: Block management program established.

1988: Montana's elk harvest exceeds 25,000.

1991: Legislature establishes the third week in September as Hunting Heritage Week. 🐾



# Celebrate the Hunter

The future of hunting in northwest Montana is in the hands of 200 people. These folks are the hunter and bowhunter education instructors in Flathead, Lincoln, Lake and Sanders counties.

Serving as volunteers, this professional corps of instructors train more than 1,000 students each year in gun and bow safety, hunter ethics, survival, wildlife identification and hunting techniques. Many instructors spend hundreds of hours of their time each year teaching classes and participating in training sessions.

Why do they do it? Youth education, safety, and increasing the awareness of hunting ethics in our communities are absolutely essential in maintaining our hunting heritage. Hunter and bowhunter education instructors have recognized this, and they've stepped forward to see that it gets done.

If you'd like to be a part of this program contact FWP at 752-5501. We'll send you an instructor application and get you in contact with your nearest hunter or bowhunter education lead instructor. 🐾

# Take a Kid Hunting

It just may be that the best thing you could do for our hunting heritage this year is to take a youngster hunting.



## Hunters Take Note:

Come and celebrate Montana's hunting traditions with speakers, prizes and refreshments. A Hunter Responsibility Workshop will be held for Sanders County residents Tuesday, Oct. 11, from 7-9 p.m. at the Plains High School Library.

This event is sponsored by FWP and Eastern Sanders County Sportsmen. For more information, call Jean Urion, 826-3341.

ing. Referred to as mentoring, this is the best way to pass along your skills and knowledge about a practice important to humans as long as we've existed as a species.

If you plan on sharing a hunting experience with a youngster, consider the following points:

- Get to know the boy or girl before you go out in the field. Talk about safety, preparation, wildlife, ethics and hunting technique.
- Review the features of the guns you'll be using on the hunt. Take some time to practice gun handling. Sight your rifles in together or practice shooting your bows or shotguns.
- Tell the youngster stories about your hunting experiences which illustrate important points. That's how hunters teach.
- Make the trip special by having an early breakfast at a favorite restaurant, a hearty dinner afterwards, or any other activity that the young hunter will enjoy.
- Be sure to choose a hunt that fits the skills and physical condition of you and your young hunting partner.
- Talk about your hunting experiences after the hunt. Remember, the hunt is for the hunt, not for the animal.
- Emphasize safety and fun!

INSIDE TRACKS is published by Region One



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